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Letter dated 13 July 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Vanuatu to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a letter dated 8 July 1998 addressed to you by His Excellency the Honourable Donald Kalpokas, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Vanuatu, in connection with the recommendation by the Committee for Development Planning regarding the graduation of the Republic of Vanuatu from the list of least developed countries.

I should be grateful if you would bring the content of this letter to the attention of the members of the Economic and Social Council. I should also be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and of its annex circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session, under agenda item 13.

(Signed) Jean **Ravou-Akii**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 8 July 1998 from the Prime Minister of Vanuatu to the President of the Economic and Social Council

Proposed graduation of Vanuatu from the list of the least developed countries

Further to my predecessor's letter of 27 August 1997 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the deliberations of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session regarding the above issue, may I reiterate my Government's concern over the proposal by the Committee on Development Planning, following its triennial review at its 1997 session, to have Vanuatu graduate from the list of the least developed countries?

My Government once again urges the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to defer the review by the Committee of the status of Vanuatu as one of the least developed countries until the year 2000. The following reasons are advanced in support of our position on this matter:

(a) We still have serious doubts about the quality of the statistics used for the exercise;

(b) We have had no technical input into the computation exercise; neither were we invited to make observations on the qualitative judgements, which had to be made in the face of inadequacies with regard to available statistics and the set of indicators employed;

(c) The Committee on Development Planning itself underlined the importance of undertaking further work on the criteria it uses to decide on the graduation of countries from the list. In this context, it also recommended that further work be carried out on a vulnerability index for possible use in the identification of the least developed countries. In the light of these developments, the Government still maintains that it would be inappropriate to ask the Economic and Social Council to finalize its views on the graduation of any further countries until the Committee has reviewed the criteria it uses and, in accordance with the request of the General Assembly, included a vulnerability index among them;

(d) As part of our nationwide Comprehensive Reform Programme, which we are currently implementing, we are focusing on domestic capacity-strengthening in all sectors, *inter alia*, within the Statistics Office. This effort will result in improved sets of statistical data on such matters as GDP, GNP and sectoral shares, life expectancy, mortality, literacy, energy consumption, primary and secondary school enrolment, sectoral employment, export concentration, and caloric intake, which are needed in order for a fair assessment to be made of our position as one of the least developed countries.

Given expected further improvement and refinement in these statistics and our wish to participate fully and constructively with the Committee on Development Planning and other relevant authorities, we believe, as mentioned above, that an assessment of Vanuatu's status should be deferred and undertaken in the year 2000 when confidence in the quality of the exercise by all parties, including ourselves, is likely to be at a higher level.

(Signed) Donald **Kalpokas**
Prime Minister